NANTWICH URBAN DISTRICT.

Report of the Medical Officer of Health,

FOR THE YEAR 1896.

Medical Officer of Health to June, 1896, the County Medical Officer; after June, 1896, Dr. J. Douglas Munro.

Population at Census 1891, 7412.

Estimated Population in middle of 1896, 7536.

Area in Acres, 703.

Birth-rate per 1000 living, 32·3.

Death-rate per 1000 living, 18·0.

Death-rate from seven principal Zymotic Diseases, 2·1.

Deaths under one year to 1000 Births, 106.

During 1896 the number of births registered in this District was 244, and the number of deaths registered was 151. However 32 of the deaths registered took place in the Workhouse, and 19 of these were of persons not belonging to the town. On the other hand, 4 persons who died in the Men's Hospital, Alvaston, (Nantwich Rural District,) belonged to the town of Nantwich. The number of deaths belonging to the Urban District was therefore 136.

The mean birth-rate during the four years 1892—95, was 32·2. The mean death-rate during the same four years was 19·7. Thus in 1896 the birth-rate was just above the mean of recent years, and the death-rate was 1·7 below the mean of recent years.

The number of births registered in the first quarter was 62, in the second 64, in the third 58, and in the fourth 60. The number of deaths belonging to the district in the first quarter was 25, in the second 43, in the third 26, and in the fourth 42.

Infant Mortality.—Twenty-six of the deaths belonging to the district were of infants under one year old, viz:—10, marasmus; 8, bronchitis or pneumonia; 4, convulsions; 3, premature birth; and 1 whooping cough. Three were registered in the first quarter, 9 in the second, 3 in the third, and 11 in the fourth. Fifteen of the 26 infants were under six months old at the time of death.

Infectious Diseases.—The number of cases of infectious diseases notified was 282, viz :—275, scarlatina ; 1, diphtheria ; and 6, erysipelas. The number of deaths from the principal zymotic diseases was 16, viz : 11 Scarlatina ; 2 measles ; 2 diarrhœa ; and 1 whooping cough.

Scarlatina was epidemic in the district since the Spring, and was still prevalent at the close of the year. Generally the disease was of a mild type, as is evidenced by the fact that only 4 per cent. of the notified cases proved fatal. Indeed the mildness of the malady, in many instances, led the parents to regard it as scarcely serious, so that instructions given for the prevention of the spread of the disease were not carried out. Children suffering from the disease have not been separated from the rest of the family even so far as might have been practicable, early symptoms of disease have escaped notice, and in several cases pupils have been found attending school during the stage of "peeling," when scarlatina is exceptionally infective. Thus the epidemic made progress till in almost every part of the town cases were reported. In September it was judged expedient to advise the closing of the public schools, and this was done for a period of six weeks. The measure was so far effectual that during this time there was a marked and steady decrease in the number of cases notified. Shortly after the re-opening of the schools scarlatina again spread, and on Dec. 7th the public schools were closed for a further period of six weeks. Of the 11 deaths certified as due to scarlatina, 4 occurred during the second quarter, 1 in the third quarter, and 6 in the fourth quarter.

Isolation Hospital needed.—The ill success of the local Authority in arresting the spread of scarlatina is doubtless due to several causes, but among these a prominent place must be given to the absence of isolation hospital accommodation. This matter has been from time to time under the consideration of the District Council, and yet no definite step towards making the needed provision has been taken. It must often happen, especially among the poor, that infectious patients cannot be properly isolated and treated at their own homes, and when these are the initial cases in an outbreak, removing them to a hospital may be the means of preventing an epidemic. Obviously some accommodation is required, and the question for the District Council to determine is, How is this to be provided? About one bed to each 1000 persons in the local population would be sufficient provision. This might be arranged for by erecting a Cottage Hospital, or by coming to terms with the Crewe Corporation for the use of their hospital, or by making joint provision with the Nantwich Rural District Council.

Measles.—A large number of cases of this disease occurred, especially during the summer and autumn. It is impossible to estimate the extent of the disease, as it is not notifiable. The cases were mostly of a mild type, but 2 deaths occurred in the third quarter of the year. One of those who died was 2 years old, and the other 14 months; in both cases the disease was complicated with bronchitis.

Whooping Cough was prevalent during the last quarter, but the cases were mostly of a mild type. There was one death ascribed to this cause in December.

Diphtheria and Erysipelas.—There was only one case of diphtheria known to the Authority in the whole year. Six cases of erysipelas were notified. There was no death registered from either disease.

Diarrhœa.—The two deaths certified as due to acute diarrhœa occurred respectively on August 30th and September 2nd; one was of a female infant (aged 20 months,) and the other of a woman 73 years old.

Lung Diseases.—Phthisis was the registered cause of death in 9 cases. This is equal to a death-rate of about 1·2 per 1000 living. Bronchitis or pneumonia was the cause of death in 27 cases, being equal to a death-rate of 3·58, which is somewhat high.

Heart Disease was the cause of death in 7 cases, being equal to a death-rate of 0·9,—a low rate.

Deaths from Injuries.—There were only 2 deaths coming under this description. One was that of a boy (10 years old,) who died in February from rupture of the bowels caused by the kick of a horse. The other death took place in October, the subject being a boy (8 years old,) killed by a fall on his head from a cart.

Scavenging and Refuse Removal.—The Inspector, Mr. Herbert Gentry, has given constant and careful attention to this work. There are upwards of 1100 pail closets, the emptying of which is done weekly at night. The contents are carted outside the town and applied to the land. The midden closets and cesspools are emptied as required.

The Main Sewers are in good order. An extension has been made during the year, about 170 yards having been laid in Wellington Road, and about 80 yards in Cemetery Road. There are 19 openings on the main sewers, which are used for inspection or flushing purposes. The main sewers are constructed with settling tanks for intercepting the solids, and these are cleansed out every three or four weeks.

House Building and Demolishing.—Nineteen new houses have been erected during the year, their sanitary arrangements having been carefully attended to; and a shoe factory is in course of erection. Five old houses have been pulled down.

Common Lodging-houses receive constant attention. There are five on the Register, and these were visited almost daily. Eleven midnight visits were also paid, and at all times the houses were found clean and orderly.

Dairies, etc.—There are 19 dairies and cowsheds, which were regularly inspected throughout the year, and found in a satisfactory state.

Bakehouses and Factories were also regularly inspected and found in good order.

Slaughter-houses.—There are 16 registered slaughter-houses in the district, and these were inspected weekly. The Inspector notes that in two instances he had to report the tenant for offences against the regulations. In one case legal proceedings were taken, but no conviction was obtained.

The water supply throughout the year has proved adequate.

Canal Boats.—There were 56 canal boats inspected during the year. Except in two cases the boats were in order, and the regulations complied with. No case of infectious disease was found in any of the boats. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Canal Boats visited the district in December. He examined the Inspector's diary, etc., and expressed himself satisfied.

Francis Vacher

J. Douglas Munro

FEB. 26TH, 1897